(b) whether NRDC has appointed some consultants for the purpose;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the present status of cement plants for which Agreements have been executed;

(e) whether NRDC has terminated some Agreements and black-listed any consultant;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the steps taken to ensure smooth functioning of such cement plants for which machinery etc. were supplied by NRDC approved consultant and fabricator?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) National Research Development Corporation (NRDC) has not executed any agreement during 1995-96 and 1996-97 for setting up of mini cement plants.

(b) and (c) NRDC has appointed six consultants and four fabricators for setting up of mini cement plants prior to 1995-96. The consultants are M/s. Paulsons Limited, Madras; M/s. Usha Mini Plant Corporation, New Delhi; M/s. Ganesh Industrial Service Agency, Ahmedabad; M/s. Jayems Engineering Co. Ltd., New Delhi; M/s. UAL Technologies, New Delhi and M/s. FACT Engineering & Design Organisation, Udyogmandal, Cochin. The fabricators are M/s. Laxmi Engineering Works, Udaipur; M/s. Minitch Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; M/s. Jayems Perkim Pvt. Ltd., Bombay and M/s. Usha Mill Associates Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

(d) A total of 29 mini cement plants have been licensed by NRDC in the country during 1976-91, based on the know how developed by Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Jorhat, many of which are running successfully. According to the available information, 3 plants out of the 29 plants for which agreements have been executed by NRDC have reported problems.

(e) and (f) NRDC terminated the agreement with one consultant viz. M/s. Usha Mini Plants Corporation, New Delhi on 1.2.1989. All the State Financial Institutions have been advised by NRDC not to finance any mini cement plant where M/s. Usha Mini Plants Corporation, New Delhi has been chosen as a consultant by the client.

(g) NRDC has examined the performance of its various licensed mini cement plants and deputed scientists at its own cost, as and when reported, to suggest solutions for ensuring their smooth functioning, although it was not obligatory on the part of NRDC to provide such services.

[Translation]

Abolition of Contract System

3527. SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are contemplating to abolish the contract system to check the incidence of crime in Railways;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) to (c) No, Sir. Railways have not recommended abolition of contract system because there is no report to indicate that contract system is contributing to increase in crime.

[English]

Power Projects

3528. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Union Government has intimated to the Andhra Pradesh that the Gadgil formula is coming in the way of Rs. 4.000 crore NTPC power project proposed to be set up in Visakhapatnam;

(b) if so, whether Prime Minister had earlier given assurance to the Chief Minister that green signal and final clearance for the construction of this project will be given soon; and

(c) if so, the reasons for not giving the clearance to this project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (c) The setting up of the Simhadri Thermal Power Project (2x500 MW) in Vishakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh by National Thermal Power Corporation has been approved by the Central Government at an estimated cost of Rs. 3650.79 crores in July, 1997.

[Translation]

Removal of Fish Plates

3529. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the incidents of removal of fish plates have occurred frequently during the last four months in Bina-Vidisha section in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for occurrence of same or the other problem and possibility of occurrence of accidents in Bina-Vidisha section;

(d) the details of the last accident that occurred on this section and the gravity of that accident; and

(e) the action taken by the Central Railway in order to improve the position of rail lines in this section?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) Only one case of suspected removal of fish plates occurred in Bina-Vidisha Section in Madhya Pradesh during the last four months.

(b) to (d) On 16.6.97 at about 1.35 hrs. engine and 13 coaches of train No. 2723Dn. Andhra Pradesh Express, derailed at K.M.Mo. 953/2-14 between Mandi Bamora and Kalhar Stations in Bina-Vidisha Section resulting in injury to 13 passengers. Civil Police, Pathari has registered a case on Crime No. 55/97 u/s 150 Railway Act and u/s 337 IPC on 16.6.97. The case is under investigation.

(e) A drive has been launched on Central Railway for welding of fish plated joint in a welded territory.

Natural Calamities

3530. SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) the parts of the country which were hit by the earthquake and where incidents of other natural calamities occurred in the year 1996-97 and 1997-98 so far;

(b) the extent of damage caused by these earthquakes and other natural calamities along with the nature of damage suffered; and

(c) the nature of assistance provided to compensate the victims of earthquakes in Madhya Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) The State Governments have reported the position for the year 1996-97 as follows:

(i) Heavy rains and floods affected parts of 21 States (Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Sikkim) and the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

(ii) Cyclones affected the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Maharashtra and Gujarat; and

(iii) Parts of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra were affected by drought.

The information in respect of 1997-98, so far, has been reported as follows :

(i) Parts of 13 States (Arunchal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Punjab) have been affected by heavy rains and floods.

(ii) Parts of 5 states (Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh) were affected by hailstorms.

(iii) Jabalpur and adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh, Parts of Himachal Pradesh and North East have been affected by moderate earthquakes.

(b) A Statement indicating the extent of damage due to various natural calamities during 1996-97 and 1997-98 so far, is given below :

Sl. No.	Damage	1996-97	1997-98
1.	Loss of Human lives	3789	844
2.	Loss of Animals (in lakhs)	2.06	0.15
3.	Population affected (in lakhs)	550.00	212.00
4.	Houses/Huts damaged (in lakhs)	23.68	4.40
5.	Cropped area affected (in lakh hectares)	130.00	27.89

(c) Government of India has released Rs. 40.42 crores to the Government of Madhya Pradesh during 1997-98 as the Central share of the Calamity Relief Fund for relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural calamities. Rs. 45.26 crores were also released from the National Fund for Calamity Relief for relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of the earthquake of May, 1997.

Reserved Posts

3531. SHRI N.J. RATHWA : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of appointments made in the departments/undertakings under his Ministry during the last three years, category-wise;

(b) the post-wise number of candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes/Tribes among them;

(c) whether some posts reserved for Scheduled Castes/Tribes have been lying vacant in the departments/undertakings under his Ministry at present;

(d) if so, the details thereof, post-wise;

(e) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the government to fill up the said reserved posts;